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MEMORANDUM

OF

THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT

ON THE

Deportation and forced Labour of the Belgian Civil Population ordered by The German Government

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MEMORANDUM
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DEPORTATION AND FORCED LABOUR OF THE BELGIAN CIVIL POPULATION ORDERED BY THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT.

THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT attempts to justify the deportation of Belgian civilians by urging reasons of various kinds.

The first is the unfavourable condition of Belgian industry, which, they argue, made it impossible to provide work for the Belgian unemployed, or, at least, work which would ensure them a decent living-wage.

The next in order is the general interest of the occupied territory, for which the occupying Power is responsible. This made it necessary that these unemployed should not remain a charge on public charity, finding in the help thereby given them encouragement of their natural indolence, and risking

the loss of their professional skill in a long period of idleness.

Finally, the safeguarding of public order and security is invoked, and we are told that the growing army of Belgians out-of-work constituted a danger to the community.

Not one of these reasons justifies the measure taken by the German Headquarters' Staff on October 3rd, 1916.

I.

The inconsequence of the German argument.—Double responsibility of the German authorities.

It will be evident at once to an intelligent mind that the motives put forward in the argument of the German Government contradict each other.

If, as a fact, we are to believe that the cause of the deportations is the stagnation of industry in occupied Belgium, it is unjust to stigmatise the, in this case, involuntary unemployment of the Belgian working classes as idleness.

If, on the other hand, the Belgian working class is justly accused of idleness, the implication is that there was work for them in Belgium; in this case the deportation to Germany is merely an arbitrary act, and it is difficult to see how it can be justified by the stagnation of Belgian industry.

What is, however, the real state of affairs in occupied Belgium?

The arrest of the majority of Belgian industries is an indisputable fact. But Germany argues therefrom as from an event due to circumstances arising from a state of war, in face of which the goodwill of the occupying power was helpless.

Now this is not true. The unfavourable state of Belgian industry is no fortuitous and inevitable case, entirely unconnected with the action of the German authorities ; they are, on the contrary, directly responsible for it.

Their responsibility is a double one :

The German Government is the direct author of the crisis in Belgian industry and Belgian labour.

The German Government deliberately prevented the Belgians from carrying out remedial measures.

II.

Immediately upon the occupation of Belgium, in spite of fallacious proclamations the German authorities put into action the plan elaborated by Dr. W. Rathenau in 1914 at Berlin, for the systematic exploitation of all the economic resources of occupied countries in favour of the military organisation of the Empire.

The Rathenau Plan.

The most notable feature of this plan was the proposed seizure of all the stocks of raw material

in the occupied territories and their transfer to Germany, in order to counteract the consequences of the closing of the seas to her ships. It was to be completed by the removal of tools, and in general, of all means of production which the Empire might require for the continuation of the struggle. Economic Committees, established in connection with all the military authorities in the occupied territories, were to be the executive agents of the Rathenau plan. By this means—as the German publicists have written on several occasions, with the approval of the Censorship—the war carried on by the Empire was to assume the character of an "economic war."

This programme was methodically carried out.

The systematic exhaustion of the economic resources of occupied Belgium.

It seemed legitimate to expect that the occupying Power, which had been relieved by Belgian initiative and the generosity of neutral countries, more especially the United States, of the task of feeding the Belgian population, should make it a point of honour to help the country to recover as speedily as possible from the accumulated damage done during the first months of the invasion. Far from this, the occupying authorities made use of their provisional legislative powers merely to throw the cloak of legality over their rapacious designs.

The file of the *Bulletin officiel des lois et arrêtés pour le territoire belge occupé* published in Brussels from the end of 1914 contains, for a period of twenty-six months, over a hundred and twenty orders of an economic nature, decreeing either the preparation of returns, embargoes on sale or purchase, seizure of products, raw materials and plant, or embargoes, restrictions, and taxes bearing on material products or implements, whether in respect of importation or exportation. The nomenclature of the objects dealt with in these orders contains over four hundred different specifications, among which there are classes further containing numerous units.

Coal, minerals, metals, chemical products ; wood and various building materials ; wools, flax, cotton and other materials for weaving ; leathers, hides and rubber, all in every possible state of industrial transformation, from the raw material to the commercial product and the waste ; further, all machines, fixed and movable, and machine-tools (in particular, the American lathes which it is impossible to replace at present) ; transmission belts ; wires for electric lighting and motor power ; oils and grease-products ; transport material, whether by road, railway or water, and an important part of the rolling-stock of local railway lines ; all traction power, whether animal or mechanical ; thoroughbreds and stud animals, and the products of breeding ; agricultural products, seed and harvests, etc., were successively immobilised, and then seized and removed from the country, as a result of legislative acts on the part of the civil authorities,

following upon innumerable requisitions by the military authorities.

The value of these seizures and requisitions amounts to billions of francs.

It must be noted that in order to execute the seizures and transfers ordered, the German authorities did not hesitate to take to pieces and demolish important plant, above all when they coveted the copper used in its construction.

The extinction of Belgian competition for the benefit of German industry.

Moreover, many of the measures taken were inspired not only by the motives of military interest denounced above, but by the underlying thought of crushing the commercial rivalry of Belgium. This was explicitly admitted in Germany itself by several authoritative publicists, notably in relation to the Belgian manufacture of glass by Dr. Goetze, President of the Syndicate of Master Glass-makers of Germany, in a study published by the *Wirtschaftszeitung der Zentralmächte* on November 10, 1916.

The Belgian Government knows, further, that the work of carrying off machinery and plant was in several cases entrusted to the representatives of German firms, the direct trade-rivals of Belgian industries, and that in one instance at least, that of a manufactory of artificial silk, the technical secrets of the Belgian firm were discovered during inspection.

Many Belgian industries were sequestrated without any plausible reason.

Finally, in 1916, the German authorities, by the imposition of prohibitive duties, dealt a crushing blow at the last Belgian industries which had kept up a relative activity by means of their commercial relations with certain neutral countries : the industries of glass-making and metallurgy.

The export taxes at present known to the Belgian Government, several of which are applied without the publication required by law, are the following :—

1. A tax of 1 per cent. *ad valorem* on all exports (order of May 2, 1916).

2. A tax of 30 florins a ton upon all metallurgical products exported to Holland.

3. A tax of 10 per cent. *ad valorem* on the exportation of window-glass and other merchandise destined for foreign countries.

Moreover, it appears from information lately received that the German administration exacts from Belgian exporters, a guarantee deposit of 20 per cent. on all merchandise exported, in order to ensure the return to Belgium of the entire sale price.

These prohibitive measures are such as to close the last markets which remained open to Belgian industry, and even to make all export trade impossible.

Their effect is aggravated in the country itself by restrictions of every kind on circulation (a complicated system of passports, the seizure of bicycle-tyres, etc.), and by the financial policy of the German authorities.

The financial policy of the German authorities.

Here we can only recall the principal acts which have characterised this policy :—

(*a*) A war contribution of 40 millions of francs a month to the German war-chest, established at first for one year, to be paid jointly by the Belgian provinces (December, 1914), under an official promise that after this there should be no further war contribution. In November, 1915, however, this contribution was rendered permanent. In November, 1916, after the German authorities had already extracted from the country nearly a billion francs, it was increased by 10 millions a month (50 millions instead of 40 millions) ;

(*b*) Imposition of the mark at the currency rate of 1 fr. 25 ;

(*c*) Refusal of the German authorities to accept payment of the war contribution in marks. The payment has to be made in francs on a large proportion of the whole ;

(*d*) Absolute prohibition of the export of securities, even in payment of the food-stuffs required for provisioning the civil population ;

(*e*) Extortion of the stock of marks in the Belgian banks, *Banque Nationale* and *Société Générale*, amounting to 430 million marks transported to Germany (September 12, 1916), with the stipulation that the sum should not be refunded until two years after the termination of the war, and then at the rate of exchange current in Berlin at the time.

Any country subjected to such a system of exploitation would have to face the calamity of unemployment. The number of Belgian workmen thus thrown out of work in spite of their desire for employment oscillates between 300,000 and 400,000; if the number—which German arguments tend to exaggerate in order to quibble in this connection—is not higher, this is due solely to the prodigies of ingenuity and initiative performed by the Belgians, who, in this domain as in others, have truly shown themselves to be "the Nation that will not die."

Direct help for the Unemployed.

It would be superfluous to insist here on the magnificent charitable and humanitarian effort of mutual aid which has made it possible in occupied Belgium, to provide for the needs of the unemployed and their families by means of direct assistance: gifts in kind, payment of indemnities, distribution of provisions and clothing, money loans, etc. The assistance given to the unemployed finally amounted to from 10 to 12 million francs a month. To this outlay the German authorities never contributed a cent; a small proportion of it was borne by the local budgets of Belgium; but the greater part of it was due to the private generosity of Belgian and foreign contributors, within and without the country, largely supplemented by subsidies from the Belgian Government.

These simple facts dispose of one of the arguments most frequently brought forward by the German Government, which asserts its conscientious reluctance to allow such a heavy burden to be laid any longer upon the local budgets of Belgian territory.

Moreover, if the German authorities were so anxious to save these budgets "unproductive expenses," they had only to give up the *permanent* war contribution of 40 million francs a month, and above all, they ought to have refrained from augmenting this by a further 10 millions, a sum which represents approximately the monthly cost of assistance to the unemployed.

The German authorities oppose the institution of an obligatory system of professional instruction for the unemployed.

In spite of the policy of economic exhaustion placed by the occupying authorities at the service of the war organisation of the Empire and the interests of German industrial competition, it was still possible to cope with the evil effects of unemployment by the classic methods inculcated by modern social economy, namely, the organisation of works of public utility, and the institution of courses of professional instruction.

The Belgian authorities did not fail in either of these duties; but instead of meeting with help or

encouragement from the occupying authorities in their efforts, they encountered first opposition, then a veto.

The intelligent initiative taken in the spring of 1915 by a group of Belgian manufacturers and philanthropists, and supported by the communal authorities of Brussels, and by the National Committee of Aid and Alimentation (which aimed at making the grant of assistance to the unemployed conditional on attendance at various professional institutions, created to keep up the technical proficiency of the Belgian workman, and guard him against temptations to idleness), was brilliantly inaugurated at Brussels in the summer of 1915.

It was greeted with unanimous approval by all Belgians, and encouraged by subsidies and promises of subsidies from generous individuals. Even German publicists praised the enterprise and its promoters. But when the latter proposed to extend it to the entire country, the German authorities opposed the measure in such a manner that this magnificent effort was completely paralysed (autumn, 1915).

For the German administration, while artificially creating unemployment in Belgium by carrying off the stocks of raw material and manufacturing plant, and by obstructing the commercial activity of the country, had conceived the plan of enrolling the compulsorily unemployed in the service of its war industry, either in the requisitioned Belgian factories or in Germany.

The German authorities prohibit public works for the unemployed.

A campaign was instituted as far back as the early summer of 1915, to break down the passive resistance of Belgian patriotism on this point; the German authorities had recourse successively or simultaneously to the lure of high wages, to intimidation, and finally to violence, to procure the labour necessary for their military objects (see 18th and 19th Reports of the Belgian Commission of Enquiry into Violations of International Law); but the attempt had failed: very few Belgian workmen had agreed to enter into the enemy's service; among the rest, a certain number were deported as prisoners to Germany, as a punishment for refusal. The German administration then resolved to prevent the Belgian unemployed from obtaining a livelihood or help elsewhere, by every means in their power; they reckoned on subduing them to their will under the pressure of the want and poverty of their families.

Hence the opposition, inexplicable at first sight, of the German authorities to the projected institution of obligatory professional instruction as a condition of the granting of relief to the unemployed.

Hence also the still more incredible opposition of the German authorities to the scheme of works of public utility for the unemployed, which had hitherto been freely organised by the local administrations.

By the decrees of August 14 and 15, the Governor-General of Belgium constituted refusal of work, and

the granting of relief to a workman who had been guilty of such refusal, criminal offences.

These decrees, it is true, still recognised the authority of the Belgian Courts and accepted reasons for refusal based on international law as valid. But at the same time, the German military authorities posted up orders in direct contradiction to these concessions, as, for instance, the order issued by General von Unger (Ghent, October 12, 1915).

"Reference to all possible Belgian laws or even to international Conventions, can never justify a refusal to work. The military Commandant is the sole judge of the propriety of the services demanded."

A few months later, the German authorities, taking a double step forward on the path of arbitrary power, decreed the prohibition of all works of public utility for the unemployed, unless special permission had been granted in each case (order of May 2, 1916); then (order of May 15, 1916) by way of repressing refusals to work, they established the principle of forced labour; at the same time, they took away the power of dealing with infringements of this principle from the Belgian Courts, and reserved it for the German Military Courts and Commandants. This meant the institution of "compulsory labour in Belgium," and necessarily of compulsory labour in the service of the enemy.

The Belgian Government possesses no complete information as to the individual prosecutions of Belgian citizens in accordance with the order of May 15, 1916. On the other hand, it holds irrefragable

evidence as to the application of that of May 2, 1916.

Hardly any further permissions for works of public utility were granted ; works already begun were interrupted ; work that had been allotted had to be countermanded ; thousands of workmen who had found an honourable occupation and a livelihood were arbitrarily reduced to idleness.

How the German authorities created forced labour ; example of the Province of Luxemburg.

The example of events in the Province of Luxemburg is particularly instructive. This province, which consists almost exclusively of agricultural and forest lands, had successfully solved the problem of unemployment. It had suffered less than any other part of the country from requisitions, and the Committee of Aid had, with a view to avoiding unemployment, undertaken a series of works in which a large part of the population had been called upon to collaborate. Thus, since the beginning of the war, they had laid 750 kilometres (466 miles) of local railway lines ; drained 624 hectares (*circa* 1,540 acres) of marshy land ; planted 1,100 hectares (*circa* 2,700 acres) of waste land ; constructed 3,000 manure pits and liquid manure cisterns ; laid out cemeteries, established water-works, and repaired cattle-sheds. On these works they spent a sum of 9,540,000 francs, almost exclusively in wages. It should be noted,

that, thanks to subsidies from the National Committee the public authorities of Provinces, Communes and State contributed no more than 1,790,000 francs to this total.

Works of the same nature were planned and approved, and in part already begun : suddenly their continuation and completion were forbidden by orders transmitted to the communal administrations, in conformity with the decree of May 2, 1916. The local administrations were advised that the works they had asked permission to undertake or continue were prohibited, *because they were intended for the relief of the unemployed*. At the same time, supplementing administrative prohibition by negociation, and sometimes by threats, the German authorities offered to employ the workmen who had been dismissed owing to these measures, on works evidently connected with military interests, in the province, or in the factories of Lorraine or Germany.

A certain number of Luxemburg workers having, however, been able to continue working in certain communal workshops which had remained open in other localities, the German authorities, as soon as they became aware of this, refused to authorise any work in which workmen from outlying communes should be employed.

Harassed thus in every place where they could still have found employment in Belgium, the Belgian working classes, by the end of September, 1916, were reduced to folding their arms in enforced idleness *by order of the German authorities.*

This was the moment chosen by the German Government to decree the deportation of the Belgian unemployed to Germany, on the official pretext "that it was no longer possible to find sufficient work in Belgium for the unemployed."

The following is the truth of the matter: *the German authorities impute to the Belgian working classes, the compulsory idleness to which they themselves have condemned the workers, of set purpose, by their policy of economic exhaustion and by their decrees concerning work.*

IV.

The German Government has attempted to throw the responsibility for the arrest of Belgian industries caused by themselves, on the English blockade. According to them, the decree was due simply to the impossibility of bringing into Belgium the raw material necessary for the activity of factories and manufactures, and then of exporting their productions.

This explanation falls to the ground, when confronted with the facts set forth above.

The English blockade is not the cause of the arrest of Belgian industry or of Belgian unemployment.

Setting aside the indisputable responsibility which will rest upon Germany before the tribunal of

History as a result of her unjust aggression on August 4, 1914, and of the countless evils engendered by this fundamental injustice, it is obvious that the blockade decreed by one of the States which had guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium, for the purpose of weakening and overcoming the aggressor of Belgium, is not the cause of the industrial crisis from which the occupied territory is suffering.

In Belgium, itself a rich and productive country, there were important stocks of raw materials. Why did the Germans carry these off, if they really wished to leave Belgium industry the means of maintaining its activity ?

There were in Belgium some industries (such as certain metallurgical industries, glass-making and china-manufactures, etc.) which might have continued their activity, and which had even shown a considerable advance from the time of their partial resumption of work after the invasion. Why did the Germans strike at their products by prohibitive duties which close neutral continental markets to them, markets not subjected to the restrictions of the blockade (that of Holland, for instance).

Why did the Germans stop the preparation of the new coal-mining areas in the Campine, which gave profitable employment to numerous workmen ?

Why did they sequestrate so many Belgian industries which were still flourishing ?

Why did they carry off thousands of machines and tool-machines, take to pieces or dismantle so much industrial plant, monopolise all the products of the

soil and the greater part of the bulk commodities, for the benefit of German "Centres" of purchase and sale, upon the operations of which the Belgians can exercise no efficacious control.

But more than this. At the close of 1915, a Belgian Industrial Committee, acting in concert with the *Commission for Relief in Belgium*, laid before the German authorities a scheme of contract agreement, accepted by the British Government, and designed to permit, on the one hand, the introduction into Belgium of the raw material necessary for Belgium factories, and, on the other, the export of their manufactures; the funds produced by the balance of these operations were to be held by a neutral bank; an ingenious financial combination would have enabled Belgian manufacturers to collect the net product of their sales without increasing the amount of Belgian capital exposed to the requisitions and war contributions of the occupying Power; the institution would have worked under the control of the *Commission for Relief in Belgium*, which is itself under the patronage of the representatives in Belgium, of the United States, of Spain and of Holland, and it would thus have offered all guarantees to the interested parties.

It was, in short, the extension to the domain of industrial provisioning of the jurisdiction of the *Commission for Relief in Belgium*, which had been operating for two years in the distribution of food stuffs, to the general satisfaction, and enjoying exemption from the English blockade.

Nevertheless, the German authorities received the proposal without enthusiasm. They left it for over five months unanswered. They refrained from the suggestion of any counter-measure. An appeal to public opinion against this strange attitude, made in the Foreign Office Memorandum of February 7, 1916 (see *Times* of February 21, 1916), succeeded merely in eliciting from the German Government a reply (semi-official Notes of February 22 and March 9, 1916) in which the proposal was garbled, and even perverted. One thing, then, became clearly apparent: the German Government refused to give any of the guarantees which were indispensable to secure for Belgian industry the entire and exclusive benefit of the exemption from blockade which the English Government, on the other hand, declared themselves ready to concede to Belgium.

The deportation of Belgian workmen is not a measure of social foresight, but a war measure.

Is it necessary to pay any further attention to the assertion of the German Government that "deportation is a measure of social foresight, the object of which is to provide the Belgian unemployed with the means of livelihood no longer obtainable from Belgian industry and agriculture."

This argument is absurd when applied to the thousands of Belgian civilians who have been subjected to compulsory labour immediately behind the German

front in Flanders and in France (even under the fire of the Allies' artillery) ; in other words, deported to a region whence all industry has long disappeared, and even the native population has been for the most part evacuated. For this class of deported workmen, it is obvious that the work they are compelled to undertake can only be in the military interests of the enemy.

Nor is the case otherwise for the Belgian civilians deported to Germany.

The Order of October 3, 1916, is, in fact, essentially a war-measure.

Its character is evident, in the first place, from the authority from which it emanates, which is not the civil Government of occupied Belgium, as in the cases of the decrees of August 14 and 15, and May 2 and 15, 1916, but the German great Headquarters' Staff.

It is further apparent from the fact that similar decrees were simultaneously enacted, also by the military authorities, for the occupied districts of Poland and Lithuania ; one and all, they were merely the realisation of a general disposition to accomplish the complete incorporation of the resources of the occupied country both in men and property, in the war organisation of the Empire.

Finally, it is proclaimed in a perfectly decisive manner by the correlation, now openly acknowledged, between the decree of October 3, 1916, and the law of December, 1916, in Germany itself, ordering the mobilisation of the entire able-bodied civil population for the auxiliary service of the army.

The deported Belgians are incorporated in this vast economico-military organisation, almost under the same legislative terms and precisely for the same ends as the able-bodied male population of Germany: with a view to helping the German army to bear the burden of the war and make the supreme effort.

VI.

As to the argument based upon the interests of public order and safety, they cannot claim a moment's attention from serious minds.

Deportation is not justified by any danger to public order.

The Belgian populations undoubtedly feel a strong aversion from the nation which has invaded their territory in contempt of treaties and its own obligations as a guarantor, and has not hesitated, in view of its own strategic advantage, to let loose the horrors of war on a little inoffensive State, standing entirely aloof from the international rivalries of the Great Powers. But the greatness of the Belgian character has been revealed not only in the heroic courage of the army, but also in the admirable self-control shown by the civil population in face of the most flagrant injustice and the most odious cruelties. During two years of very harsh occupation no insurrection and no

disturbances have broken out anywhere. All social authorities and permanent officials have laboured incessantly inculcating calm and patience among the sorely tried people.

Moreover, the population has no weapons ; enclosed in the country by fences of electrocutory wires, they are literally kept in a cage. All constitutional liberties, whether of opinion, of the press, of public meeting and of association, are suspended. The danger of disturbance is so slight that the German administration has left only relatively weak garrisons in Belgium.

VII.

As a matter of fact, consideration of the social interests of Belgium itself and of the special conditions imposed upon the country by the events of the war played no part in the elaboration of the decree of October 3, 1916 ; such considerations were merely a hypocritical pretext designed to mask under a show of false humanitarian solicitude, the odious outrage committed, in virtue of a momentary superiority of strength, on the most sacred individual rights of Belgian citizens.

The true aim of the German authorities.

The German Government has a well-defined end in view, in deporting the populations of the occupied

territories *en masse* and subjecting them to compulsory labour. This is to facilitate the employment either in active military service, or in munition factories, of a corresponding number of German workers.

This object was sufficiently set forth in the preparatory works relating to the law decreeing the civil mobilisation in Germany. The order of October 3, 1916, merely applied the general provisions of this law to the Belgian civil population, a few weeks in advance.

The question of law.

The antinomy of such a measure as against natural law and positive international law is undeniable. It has called forth the unanimous reprobation of public opinion in all countries where this opinion is free to express itself. Several neutral States consider that they could not evade the moral obligation of recording this protest of the universal conscience in official remonstrances addressed to the German Government. It may be said without exaggeration that no such attack had ever been made in modern times by a State which claimed to be civilised, on the essential rights of human beings.

The brutality and duplicity with which the measure was applied aggravated this unprecedented scandal, if indeed it was possible to aggravate it ; they wrung from Belgium, which seemed to have experienced the utmost limits of adversity for a nation at war, an

outcry of anguish, which found an echo in the horror and indignation of neutral nations.

Whereas, in 1863, the Instructions for the Army in the Field, published for the use of the American troops, noted that the deportation and reduction to servitude of the civil population of conquered States by the conqueror were no longer customary except among barbarous peoples, we have seen in Belgium the regular army of a powerful Empire employed in the methodical raiding of the citizens of a small captive nation, which had engaged in war merely to defend its independence and fulfil its international duties.

VIII.

The execution of the Order of October 3, 1916.

On the part of the occupying Power, the deportations were coldly carried out in accordance with a carefully considered plan, in spite of the most formal promises and assurances of immunity but lately lavished on the population by the most distinguished representatives of the Imperial Government, notably by the Military Governor of Antwerp and the Governor-General, Field-Marshal von der Goltz. Belgian families have been broken up pitilessly. Men of all ages (from 17 to 55 and over), of all classes (those in receipt of relief and those in easy circumstances, the unemployed and the employed, many of the latter being actually taken from their work), were

carried off in droves, transported, under most inhuman conditions, to places the names of which they were forbidden to reveal to their families, and subjected to compulsory labour in the military interests, direct or indirect, of the enemy. Before starting, they were allowed the option of accepting a so-called "voluntary" engagement at an apparently high wage for work in Germany, and deportation, with a nominal wage (30 pfennigs a day). Whether they signed the agreement or not, they were condemned to forcible separation from their families. The vast majority of them refused to sign, and even to work. They were then subjected to the most horrible treatment, scientifically graded and applied with a refinement of calculated cruelty which hitherto was held to be the monopoly of barbarous peoples or those who had relapsed into barbarism. The tortures of hunger, thirst, cold, of standing motionless for hours, of beating; threats of death and imprisonment; clubbing with the butt-ends of rifles, etc., were all applied to break down the resistance of these obscure heroes of patriotic duty.

Reports calculated to make every civilised man quiver with indignation have come into the possession of the Belgian Government, describing the unspeakable sufferings inflicted on thousands of innocent men in the camps where they are herded by the German Government, camps where this pitiable human cattle is classified, and broken in to serve the ends of German despotism.

Sufferings even greater perhaps are the portion of

the hapless victims sent to the rear of the German lines in Flanders and in France.

Forced to undertake hard tasks and labour in the open air during the most rigorous season of the year, without having ever been trained and inured thereto ; exposed to the fire of the artillery ; miserably clad, insufficiently fed, large numbers of these poor creatures succumb to exhaustion and sickness. The mortality among them seems to be considerable. The sick and dying who can travel are sent home with less consideration than was shown in ancient times to slaves by owners who were concerned to preserve the human flocks which formed part of their wealth. From these pitiable bands of repatriated sufferers we have now learnt what is the life led by their compatriots still at work ; there is but one word to describe it : it is hell.

IX.

The consequences of the outrage committed by the German Government.

All the protests made against this permanent outrage upon the dignity of civilised man, against these attacks on his corporeal integrity, his freedom to dispose of his person and his work, his right to remain with his family, his duty to refuse to serve the enemy of his country, have so far been in vain.

These outrages and attacks are continued, regardless of the terrible seeds of hatred they are sowing in the hearts of the victims and of their kin, which threaten to make all social relations impossible between two important sections of the European community perhaps for centuries.

The spectacle of such odious injustice excites more clearly from day to day in the minds of those who witness it, the impression of an abnormal kind of crime, which will become for ever inexpiable if it should be prolonged in the momentary impunity with which it is now perpetrated.

As to those who are its victims, their resolution, rising above the rigours and sufferings of their fate, remains unshaken.

No peace is possible, no peace would be durable, which should disregard the elementary rules of law, foremost among which is respect for the human person.

No abuse of power will overcome the resistance of the Belgian people to foreign oppression. History bears witness that their desire for independence is indomitable, and that their endurance is proof against all tyranny.

LE HAVRE, *February 1, 1917.*

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